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The  
American Historical Review

AN UNDEVELOPED FUNCTION<sup>1</sup>

"History is past Politics, and Politics are present History."—*Edward A. Freeman.*

"Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalized by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics."—*Sir John Seeley.*

HERE are aphorisms from two writers, both justly distinguished in the field of modern historical research. Sententious utterances, they would probably, like most sententious utterances, go to pieces to a greater or less extent under the test of severe analysis. They will, however, now serve me sufficiently well as texts.

That politics should find no place at its meetings is, I believe, the unwritten law of this Association; and by politics I refer to the discussion of those questions of public conduct and policy for the time being uppermost in the mind of the community. Taking into consideration the character and purpose of our body, and the broad basis on which its somewhat loose membership rests, the rule may be salutary. But there are not many general propositions not open to debate; and so I propose on this occasion to call this unwritten law of ours in question. While so doing, moreover, I shall distinctly impinge upon it.

Let us come at once to the point. May it not be possible that the unwritten law, perhaps it would be better to speak of it as the tacit understanding, I have referred to, admits of limitations and exceptions both useful and desirable? Is it, after all, necessary, or from a point of large view even well-considered, thus to exclude from the list of topics to be discussed at meetings of historical associations, and especially of this Association, the problems at the time uppermost in men's thoughts? Do we not, indeed, by so doing abdicate a useful public function, surrender an educational office? Do we not practically admit that we cannot trust ourselves to dis-

<sup>1</sup> President's address before the American Historical Association, December 27, 1901.

cuss political issues in a scholarly and historical spirit? In one word, are not those composing a body of this sort under a species of obligation, in a community like ours, to contribute their share, from the point of view they occupy, to the better understanding of the questions in active political debate? This proposition, as I have said, I now propose to discuss; and, in so doing, I shall, for purposes of illustration, draw freely on present practical politics, using as object lessons the issues now, or very recently, agitating the minds of not a few of those composing this audience,—indeed, I hope, of all.

I start from a fundamental proposition. The American Historical Association, like all other associations, whether similar in character or not, either exists for a purpose, or it had better cease to be. That purpose is, presumably, to do the best and most effective work in its power in the historical field. I then next, and with much confidence, submit that the standard of American political discussion is not now so high that its further elevation is either undesirable or impracticable. On the contrary, while, comparatively speaking, it ranks well both in tone and conduct, yet its deficiencies are many and obvious. That, taken as a whole, it is of a lower grade now than formerly, I do not assert; though I do assert, and propose presently to show, that in recent years it has been markedly lower than it was in some periods of the past, and periods within my own recollection. That, however, it is not so high as it should be, that it is by no manner of means ideal, all will, I think, admit. If so, that admission will suffice for present purposes.

My next contention is perhaps more open to dispute. It is a favorite theory now with a certain class of philosophers, somewhat inclined to the happy-go-lucky school, that in all things every community gets about what it asks for and is qualified to appreciate. In political discussion—as in railroad or hotel service, and in literature or religion—the supply as respects both quality and quantity responds with sufficient closeness to the demand. There is, however, good reason for thinking that, with the American community or at least with some sections and elements thereof, this at best specious theory does not at the present time hold true. Our recent political debates have, I submit, been conducted on a level distinctly below the intelligence of the constituency; the participants in the debate have not been equal to the occasion offered them. Evidence of this is found in the absence of response. I think I am justified in the assertion that no recent political utterance has produced a real echo, much less a reverberation; and it would not

probably be rash to challenge an immediate reference to a single speech, or pointed expression even, which during the last presidential campaign, for instance, impressed itself on the public memory. That campaign, seen through the vista of a twelve-month, was, on the contrary, from beginning to end, with a single exception, creditable neither to the parties conducting it, nor to the audience to whose level it was presumably gauged.

Perhaps, however, I can best illustrate what I have to say—enforce the lesson I would fain this evening teach—by approaching it through retrospect. So doing, also, if there is any skill in my treatment, I cannot well be otherwise than interesting; for I shall largely deal with events within the easy recollection of those yet in middle life. But, while those events are sufficiently removed from us to admit of the necessary perspective, having assumed their true proportions to what preceded and has followed, they have an advantage over the occurrences of a year ago; for the controversial embers of 1900 may still be glowing in 1901,—though, I must say, to me the ashes seem white and cold and dead enough. Still, I do not propose to go back to any very remote period, and I shall confine myself to my own recollection, speaking of that only of which I know, and in which I took part. My review will begin with the year 1856,—the year of my graduation, and that in which I cast my first vote; also one in which a President was chosen, James Buchanan being the successful candidate.

But it must be premised that each election does not represent a debate; not infrequently it is merely a stage in a debate. It was so in 1856; it has been so several times since. Indeed, since 1840,—the famous “Log Cabin and Hard Cider” campaign of “Coon-Skin Caps,” and “Tippecanoe and Tyler too,” probably the most humorous, not to say grotesque, episode in our whole national history, that in which the plane of discussion reached its lowest recorded level,—since 1840 there have been only six real debates, the average period of a debate being, therefore, ten years. These debates were, (1) that over Slavery, from 1844 to 1864; (2) that over Reconstruction, from 1868 to 1872; (3) Legal Tenders, or “Fiat Money,” and Resumption of Specie Payments were the issues in 1876 and 1880; (4) the issue of 1888 and 1892 was over Protection and Free Trade; (5) the debate over Bimetallism and the Demonetization of Silver occurred in 1896; and, finally, (6) Imperialism, as it is called, came to the front in 1900. Since 1856, therefore, the field of discussion has been wide and diversified, presenting several issues of great moment. Of necessity also the debates have assumed many and diverse aspects, ethical, ethnolog-

ical, legal, military, economical, financial, historical. The last is that which interests us.

The first of the debates I have enumerated, that involving the slavery issue, is now far removed. We can pass upon it historically; for the young man who threw his maiden vote in 1860, when it came to its close, is now nearing his grand climacteric. Of all the debates in our national history that was the longest, the most elevated, the most momentous, and the best sustained. It looms up in memory; it projects itself from history. As a whole, it was immensely creditable to the people, the community at large, for whose instruction it was conducted. It has left a literature of its own, economical, legal, moral, political, imaginative. In fiction, it produced *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, still, if one can judge by the test of demand at the desks of our public libraries, one of the most popular books in the English tongue. In the law, it rose to the height of the Dred Scott decision; and, while the rulings in that case laid down have since been reversed, it will not be denied that the discussion of constitutional principles involved, whether at the bar, in the halls of legislatures, in the columns of the press or on the rostrum, was intelligent, of an order extraordinarily high, and of a very sustained interest. It was to the utmost degree educational.

So far as the historical aspect of that great debate is concerned, two things are to be specially noted. In the first place the moral and economical aspects predominated; and, in the second place, what may be called the historical element as an influencing factor was then in its infancy. Neither in this country nor in Europe had that factor been organized, as it now is. The slavery debate was so long and intense that all the forces then existing were drawn into it. The pulpit, for instance, participated actively. The physiologist was much concerned over ethnological problems, trying to decide whether the African was a human being or an animal; and, if the former, was he of the family of Cain. Thus all contributed to the discussion; and yet I am unable to point out any distinctly historical contribution of a high order; though, on both sides, the issue was discussed historically with intelligence and research. Especially was this the case in the arguments made before the courts and in the scriptural dissertations; while on the political side, the speeches of Seward and Sumner, of Jefferson Davis and A. H. Stevens, leave little to be desired. The climax was, perhaps, reached in the memorable joint debate between Lincoln and Douglas, of which it is not too much to say the country was the auditory. The whole constituted a fit prologue to the great struggle which ensued.

Beginning in its closing stage, in December, 1853, when the measure repealing the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was introduced into the Senate of the United States, and closing in December, 1860, with the passage of its Ordinance of Secession by South Carolina, this debate was continuous for seven years, covering two presidential elections, those of 1856 and 1860. So far as I know, it was *sui generis*; for it would, I fancy, be useless to look for anything with which to institute a comparison except in the history of Great Britain. Even there the discussion which preceded the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, or that which led up to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, or, finally, the Irish Home Rule agitation between 1871 and 1892, one and all sink into insignificance beside it. Of the great slavery debate it may then in fine be said that, while the study of history and the lessons to be deduced from history contributed not much to it, it made history, and on history has left a permanent mark.

Of the canvass of 1864, from our point of view little need be said. There was in it no great field for the historical investigator, the issue then presented to the people being of a character altogether exceptional. The result depended less on argument than on the outcome of operations in the field. There was, I presume, during August and September of that year, a wordy debate, but the people were too intent on Sherman as he circumvented Atlanta, and on Sheridan as he sent Early whirling up the valley of the Shenandoah, to give much ear to it. Had this Association then been in existence, and devoted all its energies to elucidating the questions at issue, I cannot pretend to think it would perceptibly have affected the result.

Nor was it greatly otherwise in the canvass of 1868. The country was then stirred to its very depths over the questions growing out of the war. The shattered Union was to be reconstructed; the slave system was to be eradicated. These were great political problems; problems as pressing as they were momentous. For their proper solution it was above all else necessary that they should be approached in a calm, scholarly spirit, observant of the teachings of history. Never was there a greater occasion; rarely has one been so completely lost. The assassination of Lincoln silenced reason; and to reason, and to reason only, does history make its appeal. The unfortunate personality of Andrew Johnson now intruded itself; and, almost at once, what should have been a calm debate degenerated into a furious wrangle. Looking back over the canvass of 1868, and excepting Gen. Grant's singularly felicitous closing of his brief letter of acceptance—"Let us have peace!"—I think it would be difficult for any one to recall a single

utterance which produced any lasting impression. The name even of the candidate nominated in opposition to Grant is not readily recalled. In that canvass, as in the preceding one, I should say there was no room for the economist, the philosopher, or the historian. The country had, for the time being, cut loose from both principle and precedent.

The debate over Reconstruction, begun in 1865, did not wear itself out until 1876. In no respect will it bear comparison with the debate over slavery which preceded it. Sufficiently momentous, it was less sustained, less thorough, far less judicial. Towards its close, moreover, as the country wearied, it was gravely complicated by a new issue; for, in 1867, began that currency discussion destined to last in its various phases through the life-time of a generation. It thereafter entered, in greater or less degree, into no less than nine consecutive presidential elections, two of which, those of 1876 and 1896, actually turned upon it.

The currency debate presented three distinct phases: first, the proposition, broached in 1867, known as the greenback theory, under which the interest-bearing bonds of the United States, issued during the Rebellion, were to be paid at maturity in United States legal tender notes, bearing no interest at all. This somewhat amazing proposition was speedily disposed of; for, early in 1869, an act was passed declaring the bonds payable "in coin." But, as was sure to be the case, the so-called "Fiat Money" delusion had obtained a firm lodgment in the minds of a large part of the community, and to drive it out was the work of time. It assumed, too, all sorts of aspects. Dispelled in one form, it appeared in another. When, for instance, the act of 1860 settled the question as respects the redemption of the bonds, the financial crisis of 1873 re-opened it by creating an almost irresistible popular demand for a government paper currency as a permanent substitute for specie. Finally, when seven years later this issue was put to rest by a return to specie payments, the over-production of silver, as compared with gold, already foreshadowed the rise of one of the most serious and far-reaching questions which have perplexed modern times. Thus as the ethical and legal issues which were the staples of public discussion from 1844 to 1872 were disposed of, or by degrees settled themselves, a series of material questions arose, destined, even if at times in a somewhat languid way, to occupy public attention through thirty years.

It is difficult to say what the dividing issue of 1876 really was. The country was then slowly recovering from the business prostration which followed the collapse of 1873. The issues involved in

Reconstruction, if not disposed of, were clearly worn out, and to them the country would not respond, turning impatiently from their further discussion. Those issues might now settle themselves, or go unsettled; and, though that conclusion was reached thirty years ago, they are not settled yet. The living debate was over material questions, the cause of the prolonged business depression, and the remedy for it. The favorite specific was at first a recourse to paper money. The government printing-press was to be set in motion in place of the mint; and even hard-money Democrats of the Jacksonian school united with radical Republicans of the Reconstruction period in guaranteeing a resultant prosperity. Again the teachings of history were ignored. What, it was contemptuously exclaimed in the Senate, do we care for "abroad"! From this calamity the country had been saved by the veto of President Grant in 1874; and, the following year, an act was passed looking to the resumption of specie payments on the 1st of January, 1879. Seventeen years of suspension were then to close. Over this measure the parties nominally joined issue in 1876. The Republicans, nominating Governor Hayes, of Ohio, demanded the fulfilment of the promise; the Democrats, nominating Governor Tilden, of New York, insisted on the repeal of the law. Yet it was well understood that the candidate of the Democracy favored the policy of which the law in debate was the concrete expression. The contest was thus in reality one between the "ins" and the "outs." We all remember how it resulted, and the terrible strain to which our machinery of government was in consequence subjected. In the wrangle which ensued the material and business interests of the country recuperated in a natural way, just as had repeatedly been the case before, and more than once since; and the United States then entered on a new era of increased prosperity. This brought the paper money debate to a close. The issues presented had, in the course of events, settled themselves.

But not the less for that, in the canvass of 1876 a field of great political usefulness was opened up to the historical investigator; a field which, I submit, he failed adequately to develop. A public duty was left unperformed. It was in connection with what John Stuart Mill has in one of his *Essays and Dissertations* happily denominated "The Currency Juggle." From time immemorial to tamper with the established measures of value has been the constant practice of men of restless and unstable mind, honest or dishonest, whether rulers or aspirants to rule. History is replete with instances. To cite them was the function of the historical investigator; to marshal them, and bring them to bear on the sophistries



of the day was the business of the politician. A professorial discussion in a meeting of such an organization as this would then have been much to the point ; and yet, curiously enough, a new historical precedent was about to be worked out. That was then to be done which had never been done before ; a country which had gone to the length the United States had gone in the direction of " Fiat Money "—two-thirds of the way to repudiation—was actually to retrace its steps, and resume payments in specie at the former standards of value. History would have been searched in vain for a parallel experience.

The administration of President Hayes was curiously epochal. During it the so-called " carpet-bag governments " disappeared from the southern states ; the country resumed payments in specie ; and, on the 28th of February, 1878, Congress passed, over the veto of the President, an act renewing the coinage of silver dollars, the stoppage of which, five years before, constituted what was destined thereafter to be referred to as " the crime of 1873." This issue, however, matured slowly. Public men, having recourse to palliatives, temporized with it ; and, through four presidential elections it lay dormant, except in so far as parties pledged themselves to action calculated, in the well-nigh idiotic formula of politicians, to " do something for silver." The canvasses of 1880 and 1884 are, therefore, devoid of historical interest. The first turned largely on the tariff ; and yet, curiously enough, the single utterance in that debate which has left a mark on the public memory was the wonderful dictum of Gen. Hancock, the candidate of the defeated opposition, that the tariff was a local issue, which, a number of years before, had excited a good deal of interest in his native state of Pennsylvania. The gallant and picturesque soldier, metamorphosed into a political leader *pro hac vice*, simply harked back to the " Log Cabin " and " Coon-skin " campaign of 1840, when, a youth of sixteen, he was on his way to West Point.

Nor is the recollection of the debate of 1884 much more inspiring. It was a lively contest enough, under Grover Cleveland and James G. Blaine as opposing candidates, a struggle between the " outs " to get in and the " ins " not to go out. But a single formula connected with it comes echoing down the corridors of time, the alliterative " Rum, Romanism and Rebellion " of the unfortunate Burchard. An interlude in the succession of great national debates, the canvass of 1884 called for no application of the lessons of history.

That of 1888, presenting at last an issue, rose to the dignity of debate. In his annual message of the previous December, the

President, in disregard of all precedent, had confined his attention not only to the tariff, but to a single feature in the tariff, the duty on wool. In so doing he had, as the well-understood candidate of his party for re-election, flung down the gauntlet; for, only three years before, the Republicans, in the presidential platform, had laid particular emphasis on "the importance of sheep industry" and "the danger threatening its future prosperity." They had thus pledged themselves to "do something" for wool, as well as for silver, and the President now struck at wool as "the tariff-arch keystone." But, while in this debate the economist came to the front, there was no pronounced call and, indeed, small opportunity for the historian. The silver issue was in abeyance; the pension list and civil service were not calculated to incite to investigation; nor had history much to say on either topic. As to the sheep, now so much in evidence, the British wool-sack might afford a text suggestive of curious learning in connection with England's once greatest staple—how, for instance, as a protective measure it was by one Parliament solemnly ordained that the dead should be buried in woolens. But it will readily be admitted that the historic spirit does not kindle over tariff schedules. The lessons of experience to be drawn from revenue tables appeal rather to the school of Adam Smith than to the disciples of Gibbon.

Returning to the review of our national debates, we find that in 1892 the shadow of coming events was plainly perceptible. The tariff issue had now lost its old significance; for the infant industries had developed into trade and legislation-compelling trusts. These were suggestive of new and, as yet, inchoate problems; but to them the constituency was not prepared intelligently to address itself. Populism was rife, with its crude and restless theories; a crisis in the history of the precious metals was clearly impending, with the outcome in doubt; indiscriminate and unprecedented pension giving had reduced an overflowing exchequer to the verge of bankruptcy. The debate of 1892 accordingly dropped back to the politician's level, that of 1876, 1880 and 1884. In it there was nothing of any educational value; nothing that history will dwell upon. The "ins" pointed with pride; the "outs" sternly arraigned the "ins"; while the student, whether of economics or history, there found small place and a listless audience. The memory of the canvass which resulted in the second administration of Cleveland is quite obliterated by the issues, altogether unforeseen, which the ensuing years precipitated.

Of quite another character were the two canvasses of 1896 and 1900. Still fresh in memory, the echoes of these have indeed not yet ceased to reverberate; and I assert without hesitation that, not

since 1856 and 1860 has this people passed through two such wholesome and educational experiences. In 1896 and in 1900, as in the debates of forty years previous, there was a place, and a large place, for the student, whether investigator or philosopher. Great problems, problems of law, of economics and ethics, problems involving peace and war, and the course of development in the oldest as in the newest civilizations, had to be discussed, on the way to a solution. That the prolonged debate running through those eight years was at all equal to the occasion, I do not think can be claimed. Even his most ardent admirers will hardly suggest that Mr. Bryan in 1896 and 1900 rose to the level reached by Lincoln forty years before, nor do the utterances of either Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Depew or Mr. Hanna bear well a comparison with those of Seward, Trumbull and Sumner. And that this momentous, many-sided debate failed to rise to the proper height was due, I now unhesitatingly submit, to the predominance in it of the political "boss," and the absence from it of the scholar. In it, those belonging to this Association, and to other associations similar in character to this, did not play their proper part; they proved themselves unequal to the occasion. Indeed, in the whole wordy canvass of 1896 I now recall but two instances of the professor or philosopher distinctively taking the floor; but both of those were memorable. They imparted an elevation of tone to discussion, immediately and distinctly perceptible, in the press and on the platform. I refer to the single utterance of Carl Schurz, before a small audience at Chicago, on the 5th of September, 1896, and to the subsequent publications of President Andrew D. White, in which, from his library at Ithaca, he drew freely on the stores of historical experience in crushing refutation of demagogical campaign sophistry. Amid the petulant chattering of the political magpies it was refreshing to hear those clear-cut, incisive utterances,—calm, thoughtful, well-reasoned. I have been told that in its various forms of republication, no less than five millions, and some authorities say ten millions, of copies of that Chicago speech of Mr. Schurz were then put in circulation. It was indeed a masterly production, a production in which a high key-note was struck and sustained. But the suggestive and extremely encouraging fact in connection with it was the response it elicited. Delivering himself at the highest level to which he could attain, Mr. Schurz was only on a level with his audience. To the political optimist that fact spoke volumes; it revealed infinite possibilities.

Twelve presidential canvasses, and six great national debates have thus been passed in rapid review. It is as if, in the earlier

history of the country we had run the gamut from Washington to Van Buren. Taken as a whole, viewed in gross and perspective, the retrospect leaves much to be desired. That the debates held in Ireland and France during the same time have been on a distinctly lower level, I at once concede. Those held in Great Britain and Germany have not been on a higher. Yet ours have at best been only relatively educational; as a rule extremely partizan, they have been personal, often scurrilous, and intentionally deceptive. One fact is, however, salient. With the exception of the first, that of 1856-1860, not one of the debates reviewed has left an utterance which, were it to die from human memory, would by posterity be accounted a loss. This, I am aware, is a sweeping allegation; in itself almost an indictment. Yet with some confidence I challenge a denial. Those here are not as a rule in their first youth, and they have all of them been more or less students of history. Let each pass in rapid mental review the presidential canvasses in which he has in any degree participated, and endeavor to recall a single utterance which has stood the test of time as marking a distinct addition to mankind's intellectual belongings, the classics of the race. It has been at best a babel of the commonplace. I do not believe one utterance can be named, for which a life of ten years will be predicted. Such a record undeniably admits of improvement. Two questions then naturally suggest themselves: To what has this shortcoming been due? Wherein lies the remedy for it?

The shortcoming, I submit, is in greatest part due to the fact that the work of discussion has been left almost wholly to the journalist and the politician, the professional journalist and the professional politician; and, in the case of both there has in this country during the last forty years, been, so far as grasp of principle is concerned, a marked tendency to deterioration. Nor, I fancy, is the cause of this far to seek. It is found in the growth, increased complexity and irresistible power of organization as opposed to individuality, in the parlance of the day it is the all-potency of the machine over the man, equally noticeable whether by that word "machine" we refer to the political organization or to the newspaper.

The source of trouble being located in the tendency to excessive organization, it would seem natural that the counteracting agency should be looked for in an exactly opposite direction—that is, in the increased efficacy of individualism. Of this, I submit, it is not necessary to go far in search of indications. Take, for instance, the examples already referred to, of Mr. Schurz and President White, in the canvass of 1896, and suppose for a moment efforts such as theirs then were made more effective as resulting from the organ-

ized action of an association like this. Our platform at once becomes a rostrum, and a rostrum from which a speaker of reputation and character is insured a wide hearing. His audience too is there to listen, and repeat. From such a rostrum, the observer, the professor, the student, be it of economy, of history, or of philosophy, might readily be brought into immediate contact with the issues of the day. So bringing him is but a step. He would appear, also, in his proper character and place, the scholar having his say in politics; but always as a scholar, not as an office-holder or an aspirant for office. His appeal would be to intelligence and judgment, not to passion or self-interest, or even to patriotism. Congress has all along been but a clumsy recording machine of conclusions worked out in the laboratory and machine-shop; and yet the idea is still deeply seated in the minds of men otherwise intelligent that, to effect political results, it is necessary to hold office, or at least to be a politician and to be heard from the hustings. Is not the exact reverse more truly the case? The situation may not be, indeed it certainly is not, as it should be; it may be, I hold that it is, unfortunate that the scholar and investigator are finding themselves more and more excluded from public life by the professional with an aptitude for the machine, but the result is none the less patent. On all the issues of real moment,—issues affecting anything more than a division of the spoils or the concession of some privilege of exaction from the community, it is the student, the man of affairs and the scientist who to-day, in last resort, closes debate and shapes public policy. His is the last word. How to organize and develop his means of influence is the question.

“Here’s what should strike, could one handle it cunningly :  
Help the axe, give it a helve !”

So far as the historian is concerned, this Association is, I submit, the helve to the axe.

Of this the presidential election which closed just a year ago affords an apt illustration, ready-at-hand. No better could be asked. What might then well have been? The American Historical Association, as I have already said, is composed of those who have felt a call for the investigation and treatment of historical problems. Its members, largely instructors in our advanced education, feel that keen interest in the issues of the day natural and proper in all good citizens, irrespective of calling. They want to contribute their share to discussion; and, in that way, to influence results, so far as in them lies. From every conceivable point of view it is most desirable that they should have facilities for so doing. I hold, therefore, that in the last presidential canvass, a special meeting of this

Association, called to discuss the issues then pending, might well have tended to the better general and popular comprehension of those issues, and to the elevation of that debate. Conducted on academic principles and looking to no formal expression of results in any enunciated platform of principles, such a gathering would have exercised an influence, as perceptible as beneficial, in lifting the discussion up into the domain of philosophy and research. It would have brought the lessons of the past to bear on the questions of the day. In any event, it would certainly not have descended to that contemptible *post ergo propter* formula, which, on the one side or the other, has in every presidential canvass been the main staple of argument.

What were the issues of the last presidential canvass? On what questions did its debate turn? Three in number, they were I think singularly inviting to those historically minded. To the reflecting man the matter first in importance was what is known as "imperialism," the problem forced upon our consideration by the outcome of the war with Spain. Next I should place the questions of public policy involved in the rapid agglomerations of capital, popularly denominated trusts. Finally the silver issue still lingered at the front, a legacy from the canvass of four years previous. The debate of 1900 is a thing of the past. Each of those issues can now be discussed, as it might well then have been discussed, in the pure historical spirit. Let us take them up in their inverse order.

Historically speaking, I hold there were two distinct sides to the silver question; and, moreover, on the face of the record, the advocates of bimetallism, as it was called, had in 1896 the weight of the argument wholly in their favor. In his very suggestive work entitled *Democracy and Liberty*, Mr. Lecky refers to the discovery of America as producing, among other far-reaching effects, one which he considers most momentous of all. To quote his words: "The produce of the American mines created, in the most extreme form ever known in Europe, the change which beyond all others affects most deeply and universally the material well-being of man: it revolutionized the value of the precious metals, and, in consequence, the price of all articles, the effects of all contracts, the burden of all debts." This was during the sixteenth century, the years following the great event of 1492. Again, the world went through a similar experience within our own memories, in consequence of the California and Australia gold-finds, between 1848 and 1852. These revolutions were due to natural causes, and came about gradually. They were also of a stimulating character. From the be-

ginning of modern commercial times, however, to the close of the last century, the exchanges of all civilized communities had been based on the precious metals ; and silver had been quite as much as gold a precious metal for monetary purposes. Shortly after 1870 the policy of demonetizing silver was entered upon ; and, in 1873, the United States gave in its adhesion to that policy. Thereafter, in the great system of international exchanges, silver ceased to be counted a part of that specie reserve on which drafts were made. Thenceforth, the drain, as among the financial centers, was to be on gold alone. In the whole history of man no precedent for such a step was to be found. So far as the United States was concerned the basis, on which its complex and delicate financial fabric rested, was weakened by one-half ; and the cheaper and more accessible metal, that to which the debtor would naturally have recourse in discharge of his obligations, was made unavailable. It could further be demonstrated that, without a complete readjustment of our currencies and values, the world's accumulated stock and annual production of gold could not, as a monetary basis, be made to suffice for its needs. A continually recurring contest for gold among the great financial centers was inevitable. "A change which," in the language of Lecky, "beyond all others affects most deeply and universally the material well-being of man" had been unwittingly challenged. The only question was : would the unexpected occur ? Then, if it did occur, what might be anticipated ? Such was the silver issue, as it presented itself in 1896. On the facts, the weight of argument was clearly with the advocates of silver.

Four years later, in 1900, the unexpected had occurred. As then resumed, the debate was replete with interest. The lessons of 1492 and 1848 had a direct bearing on the present, and, in the light by them shed, the outcome could be forecast almost with certainty ; but it was a world-question. Japan, China, Hindostan entered into the problem, in which also both Americas were factors. It was a theme to inspire Burke, stretching back, as it did, to the Middle Ages, and involving the whole circling globe. Rarely has any subject called for more intelligent and comprehensive investigation ; rarely has one been more confused and befogged by a denser misinformation. The discoverer and scientist, moving hand in hand, had, during the remission of the debate, been getting in their work, and under the touch of their silent influence, the world's gold production rose by leaps and bounds. Less than ten millions of ounces in 1896, in 1899 it had nearly touched fifteen millions ; and in money value, it alone then exceeded the combined value of the gold and silver production of the earlier period. What did this signify ?

History was only repeating itself. The experiences of the first half of the sixteenth century and the middle decennaries of the nineteenth century were to be emphasized during the opening years of the twentieth.

So much for the silver question and its possible treatment. In the discussion of 1900, the last word in the debate of 1896 remained to be uttered. A page in history, both memorable and instructive, was to be turned. Next trusts—those vast aggregations of capital in the hands of private combinations, constituting practical monopolies of whole branches of industry, and of commodities necessary to man. Was the world to be subject to taxation at the will of a moneyed syndicate? The debate of a year ago over this issue, if debate it may be called, is still very recent. In it the lessons of history were effectually ignored; and yet, if applied, they would have been sufficiently suggestive. The historian was as conspicuous for his absence as the demagogue was in evidence.

The cry was against monopoly and the monopolist, a cry which, as it has been ringing through all recorded times, suggests for the historical investigator a wide and fruitful field. Curiously enough the first lesson to be derived from labor in that field is a paradox. Practically, so far as extortion is concerned, there is almost nothing in common between the old time monopoly and the modern trust. Of examples of the first, the record is monotonously full. Mere agents of the government, sometimes the favorites of the Crown, the whole machinery of the state has time out of mind been put at the service of monopolists to enable them to exact tribute from all. To the student of English history the names and misdeeds of Sir Richard Empson and Sir Giles Mompesson at once suggest themselves; while others more familiar with the drama recall Sir Giles Overreach, or that powerful scene in *Ruy Blas* in which the Spanish courtiers wrangle together, coming almost to blows, over a division among themselves of the right to extort. The old system still survives. For example, in France to-day the manufacture and sale of salt is a government monopoly. A prime necessity of life, no person not specially authorized may engage in the production of salt, or import it. If a peasant woman, living on the sea-coast of Brittany or Normandy, endeavors to procure salt for her family by the slow process of evaporating a pailful of sea water in the sun, she is engaged in an illicit trade, and becomes amenable to law. Her salt will certainly, if found, be confiscated. So of improved pocket matches. In France, their manufacture is a government revenue monopoly. They are notoriously bad. Those made and sold in Great Britain are on the contrary noted for excellence. If,



however, a box of English matches is found in the pocket of a traveller passing from England to France, it is taken from him and the contents are destroyed at once ; indeed he is fortunate if he escapes the payment of a fine. This is monopoly ; the whole strength of a government being put forth to exact an artificial profit on the sale of a commodity in general use. There is an historical literature pertaining to the subject, a lamentation, and an ancient tale of wrong.

The curious feature in the present discussion, that which in the mind of the student of things as opposed to words imparts a special interest to it, is that, while the trust or vast aggregation of capital and machinery of production in the hands of individuals intended to control competition is in fact the modern form of monopoly, it is in its methods and results the direct opposite of the old time monopoly ; for, whereas, the purpose and practice of that was to extort from all purchasers an artificial price for an inferior article through the suppression of competitors, the first law of its existence for the modern trust is, through economies and magnitude of production, to supply to all buyers a better article at a price so low that other producers are driven from the market. The ground of popular complaint against them is not that they exact an inordinate profit on what they sell, but that they sell so low that the small manufacturer or merchant is deprived of his trade. This distinction with a difference explains at once the wholly futile character of the politician's outcry against trusts. It is easy, for instance, to denounce from the platform the magnates of the Sugar Trust to a sympathizing audience ; and yet not one human being in that audience, his sympathies to the contrary notwithstanding, will the next morning pay a fraction of a cent more per pound for his sugar, that by so doing he may help to keep alive some struggling manufacturer who advertises that his product does not bear the trust stamp.

As to the outcome of conflicts of this character history tells but one story. They can have but one result, a readjustment of industries. A single familiar illustration will suffice. Any one who chooses to turn back to it, can read the story of the long conflict between the loom and the spindle. Formerly, and not so very far back, the distaff and spinning-wheel were to be seen in every house ; homespun was the common wear. To-day the average man or woman has never seen a distaff, or heard the hum of a spinning-wheel. Ceasing long since to be a commodity, homespun would be sought for in vain. Yet the struggle between the loom of the manufacturing trust and the old dame's spinning-wheel was, literally, for the latter, a fight to the death ; for, in that case, the livelihood of

the operator was at stake. Her time was worth absolutely nothing, except at the wheel ; she must needs work for any wage ; on it depended her bread. A vast domestic, industrial readjustment was involved ; one implying untold human suffering. The result was, however, never for an instant in doubt. The trust of that day was left in undisputed control of the field ; and it always must, and always will be, just so long as it supplies purchasers with a better article, at a lower price than they had to pay before. The process does not vary ; the only difference is that each succeeding readjustment is on a larger scale and more far-reaching in its effects.

Such, stripped of its verbiage and appeals to sympathy, is the trust proposition. But the popular apprehension always has been, as it now is, that this supply of the better article at a lower price will continue only until the producer, the monopolist has secured a complete mastery of the situation. Capital, it is argued, is selfish and greedy, corporations are proverbially soulless and insatiable ; and, as soon as competition is eliminated, nature will assert itself. Prices will then be raised so as to assure inordinate gains ; and when, in consequence of such profits, fresh competitors enter the field, they will either be crushed out of existence by a temporary reduction in price, or absorbed in the trust.

All this has a plausible sound ; and of it as a theory of practical outcome the politician can be relied on to make the most. But on this head what has the historical investigator to say ? His will be the last word in that debate also ; his verdict will be final. The lessons bearing on this contention to be drawn from the record cover a wide field of both time and space ; they also silence discussion. They tend indisputably to show that the dangers depicted are imaginary. The subject must, of course, be approached in an unprejudiced spirit and studied in a large, comprehensive way. Permanent tendencies are to be dealt with ; and exceptional cases must be instanced, classified and allowed for. Attempts, more or less successful, at extortion in a confidence of mastery, can unquestionably be pointed out ; but, in the history of economical development, it is no less unquestionable that, on the large scale and in the long run, every new concentration has been followed by a permanent reduction of price in the commodity affected thereby. The world's needs are continually supplied at a lower cost to the world. Again, the larger the concentration, the cheaper the product ; until now a new truth of the market place has become established and obtained general acceptance, a truth of the most far-reaching consequence, the truth that the largest returns are found in quick sales at small profits. To manage successfully one of those great and complex indus-

trial combinations calls for exceptional administrative capacity in individuals, for men of quick perception and masterful tempers. These men must be able correctly to read the lessons of experience, and, accepting the facts of the situation, they must find out how most exactly to adapt themselves to those facts. No theorist, be he politician or philosopher, appreciates so clearly as does the successful trust executive the fundamental laws of being of the interests they have in charge. They have good cause to know that under conditions now prevailing, competition is the sure corollary of the attempted abuse of control ; and, moreover, that the largest ultimate returns on capital, as well as the only real security from competition, are found not in the disposal of a small product at large profits, but in a large output at prices which encourage consumption. Throwing exceptional cases and temporary conditions out of consideration, as not affecting final results, the historical investigator will probably on this subject find himself much at variance with the political canvasser. That the last will get worsted in the argument hardly needs be said.

Does history furnish any instance of a financial, an industrial or a commercial enterprise,—a bank, a factory, or an importing company,—ever having been powerful enough long to regulate the price of any commodity regardless of competition, except when acting in harmony with and supported by governmental power ? Is not the monopolist practically impotent, unless he has the constable at his call ? To answer this question absolutely would be to deduce a law of the first importance from the general experience of mankind. So doing would call for a far more careful examination than is now in my power to make, were it even within the scope of my ability ; but if my supposition prove correct, the corollary to be drawn therefrom is to us as a body politic and at just this juncture, one of the first and most far-reaching import. In such case, the modern American trust, also, so far as it enjoys any power as a monopoly, or admits of abuse as such, must depend for that power and the opportunity of abuse solely on governmental support and coöperation. Its citadel is then the custom house. The moment the United States revenue officer withdrew his support, the American monopolist would cease to monopolize, except in so far as he could defy competition by always supplying a better article at a price lower than any other producer in the whole world. And here, having deduced and formulated this law, the purely historical investigator would find himself trenching on the province of the economist. The so-called protective system would now be in question. Thus again, as so often before, the tariff would

become the paramount issue. But the tariff would no longer stand in the popular mind as the beneficent protector of domestic enterprise; it would, on the contrary, be closely associated with the idea of monopoly, it would be assailed as the Bastille of the monopolist. From the historical and economical points of view, however, the debate would not, because of that, undergo any diminution of interest. Whatever the politician might in discussion assert, or the opportunist incorporate into legislation, we may rest assured that this issue will ultimately settle itself in accordance with those irresistible underlying influences which result in what we know as natural evolution. History is but the record of the adjustment of mankind in the past to the outcome of those influences, moral, geological, industrial and climatic; and, in this respect, when all is said and done, it is tolerably safe to predict that the future will present no features of novelty. If, then, we can measure correctly the nature of the influences at work, experience furnishes the data from which the character, as well as the extent, of the impending readjustment may be surmised. For such a diagnosis the historian and economist are requisite.

It remains to pass on to the third and last of the matters in debate during 1900, that known as imperialism. This was the really great issue before the American people then; and it is the really great issue before them now. That issue, moreover, I with confidence submit, can be intelligently considered only from the historical standpoint. Indeed, unless approached through the avenues of human experience, it is not even at once apparent how the question, as it now confronts us, arose and injected itself into our political action; and accordingly, it is in some quarters even currently assumed that it is there only fortuitously, a feature in the great chapter of accidents, a passing incident, which may well disappear as mysteriously and as suddenly as it came. Studied historically, I do not think this view of the situation will bear examination. On the contrary, I fancy even the most superficial investigator, if actuated in his inquiry by the true historical spirit, would soon reach the conclusion that the issue so recently forced upon us had been long in preparation, was logical and inevitable, and for our good or our evil must be decided, rightly or wrongly, on a large view of great and complex conditions. In other words, there may be reason to conclude that an inscrutable law of nature, at last involving us, has long been and now is evolving results. It is one more phase of natural evolution, working itself out, as in the case of Rome twenty-five centuries ago, through the survival and supremacy of the fittest.

I need hardly say, I feel myself now venturing on some dangerous generalizations; and yet I do not see how the American investigator, who endeavors to draw his conclusions from history, can recoil from the venture. His deductions will probably be erroneous—indeed, they are sure to be so to some extent; and, in making them, he is more than likely to betray a very considerable capacity in the line of superficiality. None the less, even if it be of small value, he is bound to offer what he has. If the seed he throws bears no fruit, it can do small harm.

Mr. Leslie Stephen, in one of his essays, truly enough says: "The Catholic and the Protestant, the Conservative and the Radical, the Individualist and the Socialist, have equal facility in proving their own doctrines with arguments, which habitually begin, 'All history shows.' Printers should be instructed always to strike out that phrase as an erratum, and to substitute 'I choose to take for granted.'" And elsewhere the same writer lays it down as a general proposition that: "Arguments beginning 'all history shows' are always sophistical."<sup>1</sup> What is by some known as the doctrine of manifest destiny is, I take it, identical with what others, more piously minded, refer to as the will, or call, of God. The Mohammedan and the modern Christian gospel-monger say "God clearly calls us" to this or that work; and with a conscience perfectly clear, they then proceed to rob, slay and oppress. In like manner, the political buccaneer and land-pirate proclaims that the possession of his neighbor's territory is rightfully his by manifest destiny. The philosophical politician next drugs the conscience of his fellowmen by declaring solemnly that "all history shows" that might is right; and with time, the court of last appeal, it must be admitted possession is nine points in the law's ten. It cannot be denied, also, that quite as many crimes have been perpetrated in the name of God and of manifest destiny as in that of liberty. That, at least, "all history shows." But, all the same, just as liberty is notwithstanding a good and desirable thing, so God does live and will, and there is something in manifest destiny. As applied to the development of the races inhabiting the earth it is, I take it, merely an unscientific form of speech; the word now in vogue is evolution, the phrase "survival of the fittest." When all is said and done, that unreasoning instinct of a people which carries it forward in spite of and over theories to its manifest destiny, amid the despairing outcries and long-drawn protestations of theorists and ethical philosophers, is a very considerable factor in making history; and, consequently one to be reckoned with.

<sup>1</sup> *Social Rights and Duties*, Vol. I., p. 129; *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 260.

In plain words then, and Mr. Stephen to the contrary notwithstanding, "all history shows" that every great, aggressive and masterful race tends at times irresistibly towards the practical assertion of its supremacy, usually at the cost of those not so well adapted to existing conditions. In his great work Mommsen formulates the law with a brutal directness distinctly Germanic :

"By virtue of the law, that a people which has grown into a state absorbs its neighbours who are in political nonage, and a civilized people absorbs its neighbours who are in intellectual nonage—by virtue of this law, which is as universally valid and as much a law of nature as the law of gravity—the Italian nation (the only one in antiquity which was able to combine a superior political development and a superior civilization, though it presented the latter only in an imperfect and external manner) was entitled to reduce to subjection the Greek states of the East which were ripe for destruction, and to dispossess the peoples of lower grades of culture in the West—Libyans, Iberians, Celts, Germans—by means of its settlers ; just as England with equal right has in Asia reduced to subjection a civilization of rival standing, but politically impotent, and in America and Australia has marked and ennobled and still continues to mark and ennoble, extensive barbarian countries with the impress of its nationality." <sup>1</sup>

Professor Von Holst again states a corollary from the law thus laid down in terms scarcely less explicit, in connection with a well-known and much discussed act of foreign spoliation in our own comparatively recent history : "It is as easy to bid a ball that has flown from the mouth of the gun to stop in its flight, and return on its path, as to terminate a successful war of conquest by a voluntary surrender of all conquests, because it has been found out that the spoil will be a source of dissension at home." <sup>2</sup> And then Von Holst quotes a very significant as well as philosophical utterance of William H. Seward's, which a portion of our earnest protestants of to-day would do well to ponder : "I abhor war, as I detest slavery. I would not give one human life for all the continents that remain to be annexed ; but I cannot exclude the conviction that the popular passion for territorial aggrandizement is irresistible. Prudence, justice, cowardice, may check it for a season, but it will gain strength by its subjugation. . . . It behooves us then to qualify ourselves for our mission. We must dare our destiny." <sup>3</sup> One more, and I have done with quotations. The last I just now commended to the thoughtful consideration of those classified in the political nomenclature of the day as Anti-Imperialists. A most conscientious and high-minded class, possessed with the full courage of their convictions, the efforts of the Anti-Imperialists

<sup>1</sup> *History of Rome*, Book V., chap. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the United States*, Vol. III., p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, Vol. III., p. 409.

will not fail, we and they may rest assured, to make themselves felt. They enter into the grand result. Nevertheless, for them also there is food for thought, perhaps for consolation, in this other general law, laid down in 1862 by Richard Cobden, than whose, in my judgment, the utterances of no English speaking man in the nineteenth century were more replete with shrewd sense expressed in plain, terse English :

“ From the moment the first shot is fired, or the first blow is struck, in a dispute, then farewell to all reason and argument ; you might as well attempt to reason with mad dogs as with men when they have begun to spill each other’s blood in mortal combat. I was so convinced of the fact during the Crimean war, which, you know, I opposed, I was so convinced of the utter uselessness of raising one’s voice in opposition to war when it has once begun, that I made up my mind that as long as I was in political life, should a war again break out between England and a great Power, I would never open my mouth upon the subject from the time the first gun was fired until the peace was made, because, when a war is once commenced, it will only be by the exhaustion of one party that a termination will be arrived at. If you look back at our history, what did eloquence, in the persons of Chatham or Burke, do to prevent a war with our first American colonies ? What did eloquence, in the persons of Fox and his friends, do to prevent the French revolution, or bring it to a close ? And there was a man who at the commencement of the Crimean war, in terms of eloquence, in power, and pathos, and argument equal—in terms, I believe, fit to compare with anything that fell from the lips of Chatham and Burke—I mean your distinguished townsman, my friend Mr. Bright—and what was his success ? Why, they burnt him in effigy for his pains.”

Turning from the authorities, and the lessons by them deduced from the record called History, let us now consider the problem precipitated on the American people by the Spanish war of 1898. That question,—the burning political issue of the hour,—I propose here and now to discuss. I propose to discuss it, however, from the purely historical standpoint, and not at all in its moral or economical aspects. So far then as this question is concerned, the last presidential vote, that of 1900, settled nothing, except that the policy which had assumed a certain degree of form in the treaty of Paris should not be reversed. All else was left for debate, and ulterior settlement. Certain lessons, calculated greatly to influence the character of that settlement, can, I submit, now be most advantageously drawn from history. At formulating those lessons I propose here to try my hand.

The first and most important lesson is one which, in theory at least, is undisputed ; though to live up to it practically calls for a courage of conviction not yet in evidence. That a dependency is not merely a possession, but a trust, a trust for the future, for itself and for humanity, is accepted by us in this debate as a postulate ;

accordingly, our dependencies are in no wise to be exploited for the general benefit of the alien owner, or that of individual components of that owner, but they are to be dealt with in a large and altruistic spirit with an unselfish view to their own utmost development, materially, morally and politically. And, through a process of negatives, "all history shows" that only when this course is hereafter wisely and consecutively pursued, should that blessed consummation ever be attained, will the dominating power itself derive the largest and truest benefit from its possessions.

As yet no American of any character, much less of authority, has come forward to controvert this proposition. That it will be controverted, and attempts made by interested parties to sophisticate it away through the cunningly arranged display of exceptional circumstances, can with safety be predicted. In this respect, to use a cant phrase, "we know how it is ourselves." We all remember, for instance, the unspeakable code of factitious morals and deceptive philosophy manufactured to order in these United States as a "Gospel of Niggerdom" less than half a century ago. Coming down to more recent times, we can none of us yet have forgotten the wretched sophistry ignorantly resurrected from the French Revolution and assignat days in glorification of "Fiat Money," and a business world emancipated at last from any heretofore accepted measures of value. The leopard, rest assured, has not changed its spots since either 1860 or 1876. The "New Gospel" phase of the debate now on is, however, yet to develop itself. But, assuming the correctness of the proposition I have just formulated, a corollary follows from it. A formidable proposition, I state it without limitations, meaning to challenge contradiction, I submit that there is not an instance in all recorded history, from the earliest precedent to that now making, where a so-called inferior race or community has been elevated in its character, or made self-sustaining and self-governing, or even put on the way to that result, through a condition of dependency or tutelage. I say "inferior race"; but, I fancy, I might state the proposition even more broadly. I might, without much danger, assert that the condition of dependency, even for communities of the same race and blood, always exercises an emasculating and deteriorating influence. I would undertake, if called upon, to show also that this rule is invariable,—that, from the inherent and fundamental conditions of human nature it has known and can know no exceptions. This truth, also, I would demonstrate from well-nigh innumerable examples, that of our own colonial period among the number. In our case, it required a century to do away in our minds and hearts with our dependential traditions. The Civil War,



and not what we call the Revolution, was our real war of Independence. And yet in our time of dependency you will remember we were not emasculated into a resigned and even cheerful self-incapacity as the natural result of a kindly, paternal and protective policy; but, as Burke with profound insight expressed it, with us the spirit of independence and self-support was fostered "through a wise and salutary neglect." But, for present purposes, all this is unnecessary, and could lead but to a poor display of commonplace learning. The problem to-day engaging the attention of the American people is more limited. It relates solely to what are called "inferior races"; those of the same race, or of cognate races, we as yet do not propose to hold in a condition of permanent dependency; those we absorb, or assimilate. Only those of "inferior race," the less developed or decadent, do we propose to hold in subjection, dealing with them, in theory at least, as a guardian deals with a family of wards.

My proposition then broadens. If history teaches anything in this regard it is that race elevation, the capacity in a word for political self-support, cannot be imparted through tutelage. Moreover, the milder, the more paternal, kindly and protective the guardianship, the more emasculating it will prove. A "wise and salutary neglect" is the more beneficent policy; for, with races as with individuals, a state of dependency breeds the spirit of dependency. Take Great Britain for instance. That people, working at it now consecutively through three whole centuries, after well-nigh innumerable experiences and as many costly blunders, Great Britain has, I say, developed a genius for dealing with dependencies, for the government of "inferior races"; a genius far in advance of anything the world has seen before. Yet my contention is that, to-day, after three rounded centuries of British rule, the Hindus, the natives of India, in spite of all material, industrial and educational improvements—roads, schools, justice and peace—are in 1900 less capable of independent and ordered self-government, than they were in the year 1600, the year when the East India Company was incorporated under a patent of Elizabeth. The native Indian dynasties, those natural to the Hindus, have disappeared; accustomed to foreign rule the people have no rulers of their own, nor could they rule themselves. The rule of aliens has with Hindostan thus become a domestic necessity. Remove it—and the highest and most recent authorities declare it surely will some day be removed—chaos would inevitably ensue. What is true of India is true of Egypt. That, under British rule, Egypt is to-day in better material and political case than ever before in its history, modern, biblical, hiero-

glyphic or legendary, scarcely admits of dispute. Schools, roads, irrigation, law and order, and protection from attack, she has them all ;

“ But what avail the plough or sail,  
Or land or life, if freedom fail ? ”

The capacity for self-government is not acquired in that school.

But of this England itself furnishes an example in its own history, an example well-nigh forgotten. In fundamentals human nature is much the same now as twenty centuries back. During the first century of the present era, the Romans, acting in obedience to the law laid down by Mommsen—the law quoted by me in full, and the law of which Thomas Carlyle is the latest and most eloquent exponent, the law known as the Divine Right of the most Masterful—acting in obedience to that law, the Romans in the year of Grace 43 crossed the British channel, overthrew the Celts and Gauls gathered in defence of what they mistakenly deemed their own, and, after reducing them to subjection, permanently occupied the land. They remained there four centuries, a hundred years longer than the English have been in Calcutta. During that period they introduced civilization, established Christianity, constructed roads, dwellings and fortifications. Materially, the condition of the country vastly improved. The Romans protected the inhabitants against their enemies ; also against themselves. During hundreds of years they benevolently assimilated them. Doubtless on the banks of the Tiber the inhabitants of what is now England were deemed incapable of self-government. Probably they were ; unquestionably they became so. When the legions were at last withdrawn, the results of a kindly paternalism, secure protection and intelligent tutelage became apparent. The race was wholly emasculate. It cursed its independence ; it deplored its lost dependency. As the English historian now records the result—“ They forgot how to fight for their country when they forgot how to govern it.”<sup>1</sup>

Man is always in a hurry ; God never !—is a familiar saying. Certainly, nature works with a discouraging indifference to generations. Each passing race of reformers and regenerators does indisputably love to witness some results of its efforts ; but, in the case of England, in consequence of the emasculation incident to tutelage, and dependency on a powerful, a benevolent and beneficent foreign rule, after that rule ended—as soon or late such rule always must end—throughout the lives of eighteen successive generations emasculated England was over-run. At last, with some half dozen intermediate rulers, the Normans succeeded the Romans. They were conquering masters ; but they domesticated themselves in the

<sup>1</sup> Green, *Short History of the English People*, Vol. I., p. 9.

British Islands, and in time assimilated the inhabitants thereof, Saxons, Picts and Celts, benevolently or otherwise. But, as nearly as the historian can fix it, it required eight hundred years of direst tribulation to educate the people of England out of that spirit of self-distrust and dependency into which they had been reduced by four centuries of paternalism, at once Roman and temporarily beneficent. Twelve centuries is certainly a discouraging term to which to look forward. But steam and electricity have since then been developed to a manifest quickening of results. Even the pace of nature was in the nineteenth century vastly accelerated.

Briefly stated then, the historical deduction would seem to be somewhat as follows: where a race has in itself, whether implanted there by nature or as the result of education, the elevating instinct and energy, the capacity of mastership, a state of dependency will tend to educate that capacity out of existence; and the more beneficent, paternal and protecting the guardian power is, the more pernicious its influence becomes. In such cases, the course most beneficial in the end to the dependency, now as a century ago, would be that characterized by "a wise and salutary neglect." Where, however, a race is for any cause not possessed of the innate saving capacity, being stationary or decadent, a state of dependency, while it may improve material conditions, tends yet further to deteriorate the spirit and to diminish the capacity of self-government; if severe, it brutalizes; if kindly, it enervates. History records no instance in which it develops and strengthens.

Following yet further the teachings of experience, we are thus brought to a parting of the ways, a parting distinct, unmistakable. Heretofore the policy of the United States, as a nationality, has, so far as the so-called inferior races are concerned, been confined in its operation to the North American continent; but, as a whole and in its large aspects, it has been well defined and consistent. We have proceeded on the theory that all government should in the end rest on the consent of the governed; that any given people is competent to govern itself in some fashion, and that, in the long run, any fashion of self-imposed government works better results than will probably be worked by a government imposed from without. In other words, the American theory has been that, in the process of nature and looking to ultimate, perhaps remote, conditions, any given people, not admitting of assimilation, will best work out its destiny when left free to work it out in its own way. Moreover, so far as outside influence is concerned, it can, in the grand result, be more effectively exercised through example than by means of active intervention. Where we have not therefore forcibly absorbed into

our system foreign and inferior races or elements, and more or less completely assimilated them, we have, up to very recently, adopted and applied what may perhaps in homely speech best be described as a "Hands-off and Walk-alone" doctrine, relying in our policy towards others on the theory practiced at our private firesides, the theory that self-government results from example, and is self-taught. I have already quoted Richard Cobden in this connection; I will quote him again. Referring, in 1864, to the British foreign policy, then by him as by us denounced, though by us now imitated, Cobden said: "I maintain that a man is best doing his duty at home in striving to extend the sphere of liberty, commercial, literary, political, religious, and in all directions; for if he is working for liberty at home, he is working for the advancement of the principles of liberty all over the world."

Mexico and Hayti afford striking illustrations of a long and rigid adherence to this policy on our part, and of the results of that adherence. Conquering and dismembering Mexico in 1847, we, in 1848, left it to its own devices. So completely had the work of subjugation been done, that our representatives had actually to call into being a Mexican government with which to arrange terms of peace. With that simulacrum of a national authority we made a solemn treaty; and, after so doing, left Mexico to work out its destiny, if it could, as it could. In spite of numerous domestic convulsions and much internal anarchy, from that day to this we have neither ourselves intervened in the internal affairs of our southern continental neighbor, nor long permitted such interference by others. To Mexico, we have said "Walk-alone"; to France, "Hands-off." The result we all know. It has gone far to justify our theory of the true path of human advancement. Forty years is, in matters of race development, a short time. A period much too short to admit of drawing positive, or final, inferences. Dr. Holmes was once asked by an anxious mother when the education of a child should begin; his prompt, if perhaps unexpected, reply was: "Not less than 250 years before it is born." To-day, and under existing conditions, Mexico, though republican in name and form only, is self-governing in reality. It is manifestly working its problem out in its own way. The statement carries with it implications hardly consistent with the might-is-right latter-day dispensation voiced by Mommsen and Carlyle.

Hayti presents another case in point, with results far more trying to our theory. We have towards Hayti pursued exactly the policy pursued by us with Mexico. Not interfering ourselves in the internal affairs of the island, we have not permitted interference by

others. For the condition of affairs prevailing in Hayti, occupied by an inferior race, apparently lapsing steadily toward barbarism, the United States is morally responsible. Acting on the law laid down in the extract I have given from the pages of Mommsen, we might at any time during the last quarter of a century have intervened in the name of humanity, and to the great temporary advantage of the inhabitants of the one region "where Black rules White." The United States, in pursuance of its theories, has abstained from so doing. It has abstained in the belief that, in the long run and grand result, the inhabitants of Hayti will best work out their problem, if left to work it out themselves. In any event, however, exceptional cases are the rocks on which sound principles come to wreck; and, so far as the race of man on earth is concerned, it is better that Hayti should suffer self-caused misfortune for centuries, as did England before, than that a precedent should be created for the frequent violation of a great principle of natural development. Yet the case of Hayti is crucial. Persistently to apply our policy there evinces, it must be admitted, a robust faith in the wisdom of its universal application. The logical inference, so far as the Philippine Islands is concerned, is obvious.

Historically speaking, those now referred to are the only two theories of a national policy to be pursued in dealing with the practical dependencies, which challenge consideration, the American and the British. The others, whether ancient and abandoned, or modern and in use,—Phoenician, Roman, Spanish, French, Dutch, German or Russian,—may be dismissed from the discussion. They none of them ever did, nor do any of them now, look to an altruistic result. In all, the dependency is confessedly exploited on business principles, with an eye to the trade development of the alien proprietor. Setting these aside, there remain only the American, or "Walk-alone and Hands-off" theory; and the British, or "Ward in Chancery" theory. The first is exemplified in Mexico and Hayti; the last in Hindostan and Egypt. The question now in debate for the United States may, therefore, be concisely stated thus: taking the Philippine Islands as a subject for treatment, and the ultimate elevation of the inhabitants of those islands to self-government as the end in view, which is the policy best calculated to lead to the result desired,—the traditional and distinctively American system, as exemplified in the cases of Mexico and Hayti, or the modern and improved British system, to be studied in Hindostan and Egypt?

Subject to limitations of time and space I have now passed in review the great political debates which have occupied the attention

of the American public during the last half century. I have endeavored to call attention to the plane on which those debates have been conducted, and to the noticeable absence from them of a scholarly spirit. The judicial temper and the patience necessary to any thorough investigation have in them, I submit, been conspicuously lacking. Then, starting from the point of view peculiar to this Association, I have examined the issues presented to the country in the last presidential canvass, and, for purposes of illustration, I have discussed them, always in a purely historical temper.

While the result of my experiment is for others to pass upon, my own judgment is clear and decided. I hold that the time has now come when organizations such as this of ours, instead of, as heretofore, scrupulously standing aloof from the political debate, are under obligation to participate in it. As citizens, we most assuredly should, in so far as we may properly so do, contribute to results, whether immediate, or more or less remote. As scholars and students, the conclusions we have to present should be deserving of thoughtful consideration. The historical point of view moreover, is, politically, an important point of view ; for only when approached historically, by one looking before as well as after, can any issue be understood in its manifold relations with a complex civilization. Indeed, the moral point of view can in its importance alone compare with the historical. The economical, vital as it unquestionably often is, comes much lower in the scale ; for, while an approach through both these avenues is not infrequently necessary to the intelligent comprehension of questions of a certain class, such, for instance, as the tariff or currency, it is very noticeable that, though many issues present themselves, slavery or imperialism for example, into which economical considerations do not enter as controlling factors, there is scarcely any matter of political debate which does not to some extent at least have to be discussed historically. Still, though our retrospect has proved this to be the case, the scarcely less significant fact also appears that not more than one presidential canvass in two involves any real issue at all, moral or economical. Of the last twelve elections, covering the half century, six were mere struggles for political control ; and so far as can now be seen, the course of subsequent events would have been in no material respect other than it was whichever party prevailed. Judging by experience, therefore, in only one future canvass out of two will any occasion arise for a careful historical presentation of facts. The investigator will not be called upon ; and, if he rises to take part in the discussion, he will do no harm for the excellent reason that no one will listen to him. In the other of each two

canvasses it is not so. There is then apt to be a real debate over a paramount issue; and, in all such, the strong search-light of experience should be thrown, clearly and fully, over the road we are called upon to traverse. In every such case, the presentation, provided always it be made in the true historical spirit, should by no means be of one side only. On the contrary, every phase of the record should have its advocate; every plausible lesson should be drawn. The facts are many, complicated and open to a varied construction; and it is only through the clash of opposing views that they can be reduced to comparative system, and compelled to yield their lessons for guidance.

As I have also, more than once already, observed, this Association is largely made up of those occupying the chairs of instruction in our seminaries of the higher education. From their lecture rooms the discussion of current political issues is of necessity excluded. There it is manifestly out of place. Others here are scholars for whom no place exists on the political platform. Still others are historical investigators and writers, interested only incidentally in political discussion. Finally some are merely public-spirited citizens, on whom the oratory of the stump palls. They crave discussion of another order. They are the men whose faces are seen only at those gatherings which some one eminent for thought or in character is invited to address. To all such, the suggestion I now make cannot but be grateful. It is that, in future, this Association, as such, shall so arrange its meetings that one at least shall be held in the month of July preceding each presidential election. The issues of that election will then have been presented, and the opposing candidates named. It should be understood that the meeting is held for the purpose of discussing those issues from the historical point of view, and in their historical connection. Absolute freedom of debate should be insisted on, and the participation of those best qualified to deal with the particular class of problems under discussion, should be solicited. Such authorities, speaking from so lofty a rostrum to a select audience of appreciative men and women could, I confidently submit, hardly fail to elevate the standard of discussion, bringing the calm lessons of history to bear on the angry wrangles and distorted presentations of those whose chief, if not only, aim is a mere party supremacy.

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